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Relative to Possibility of Palestine Civil War

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INTRODUCTION

This report is based on monitored foreign broadcast material, almost entirely emanating from radio in the Near and Middle East, during the period 1 September, when the UNSCOP report was made public, to 3 November 1947. Although the available monitored material yields no data whatever relative to illegal armed organizations in Palestine, it does provide fragmentary and sporadic references pertinent to the attitudes, plans, and activities of certain Arab States, or among elements therein, in the event of civil war in Palestine.

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SUMMARY

The belligerent tone of Arab broadcasts continues to gather momentum, in spite of Soviet-U.S. agreement to support partition. On the other hand, actual threats of definite military action are confined to the statement that Arab troops will "enter" Palestine when the British leave.

Radio reports cast some doubt upon the likelihood that Egypt or Transjordan would fight, and there is almost no mention of Saudi Arabia in this connection.

Monitored broadcasts reveal few facts on troop strength, though an Egyptian organization claims 10,000 new volunteers.

Numerous minor items relate to troops on Palestine's northern and southern frontiers, especially the northern. For example: Syrian unchanized forces are reported near Kuneitra and east of Lake Tiberias; British forces in Roshpina are reported replaced by Transjordan Frontier Guards with an Arab majority; an Egyptian regiment has been ordered to El-Arish.

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I. INTENTIONS OF THE ARAB STATES

Soviet-U.S. agreement to the partition of Palestine has not produced any noticeable diminution in the denunciations of partition on the part of the Arab radios, nor in the frequency of reports of military preparation. On the other hand, actual threats of war do not occur except in the following forms: melodramatic general threats; reports of border preparations; and assertions that the Arab troops will enter Palestine when the British leave.

There appear to be doubts about Egypt's readiness to fight, based on the fact that it did not participate in the general Arab protest-strike against partition, and on vehement denial of rumors that it is not standing with the other Arab states. There is also room for doubt about Transjordan's readiness, based on King Abdullah's statement of preference for peace. Saudi Arabia is almost never mentioned in this connection.

a. Little Effect of Soviet-U.S. Stand on Belligerence of Broadcasts: With regard to the likelihood that Arab readiness to use force might be reduced by the prospect of united Soviet-U.S. opposition in the U.N., it should be noted that the belligerent tone of the Arab radio has, if anything, increased since 13 October, when the Soviet stand was announced. Both vilification of Zionists (chiefly over the Damascus radio) and miscellaneous references to army maneuvers, volunteers, etc., have continued with at least as much frequency and intensity as before that date.

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b. Few Definite Threats of Wars In spite of their general belligerence, the Arab radios exhibit a noteworthy absence of specific threats of war which, if made, would involve loss of face in the event they were not carried out. The threats that do occur take the following forms: (1) melodramatic assertions that the Zionists are "assassins" who will be "exterminated" and that enforcing partition would cause "revolt" of all Arabs throughout the world; (2) references to troops on frontiers and consultations of commanders; (3) definite statements that Arab forces will "go to Palestine"--without saying what they will do there--when the British withdraw. The Prime Minister of Iraq is quoted (by London) as saying "that the Iraqi Army would go to Palestine if the U.N. adopted partition. He declined to give the dispositions of the Iraqi forces, but said that they would enter Palestine within a matter of minutes if the British troops withdraw." (London, 23 October 1947)

The Grand Mufti is quoted as follows: "Withdrawal of the British from Palestine is an essential prerequisite, and we have met their declaration with satisfaction. We are waiting for implementation of the evacuation to achieve our rights in full." (as told to Beirut paper AL-HAYAT, quoted by Sharq ul-Adna, Jaffa, in Arabic, 16 October 1947)

c. Ambiguity in the Positions of Egypt and Transjordan; No Word on Saudi Arabia The most emphatic and consistent support of the Arab cause, as judged by radio reports, comes from Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and the Arabs of Palestine itself. Saudi Arabia is not heard from at all, nor have there been any monitored broadcasts describing military support by it. Pakistan and Iran report only "volunteers," though Jinnah announces "fullest support." There is also some ambiguity in the positions of Egypt and Transjordan:

1. Egypt. There are several reports of Egyptian troops being sent to the Palestinian border (see below), and it is reported that 10,000 Egyptian troops are being trained for the fight. King Farouk is said by the Beirut radio to be "interested in rescuing Palestine as much as he is interested in liberating Egypt and uniting the Nile valley."

On the other hand, there have been no quoted official statements by Egyptian representatives; the Cairo radio is relatively non-belligerent; the general strike on 3 October against the UNSCOP recommendations is said to have "extended throughout all the Arab countries except Egypt"; and very recently (29 October) the Arab League issued a long and vehement denial of rumors that Egypt was not fully supporting the Arabs of Palestine. The wording of this denial suggests that there have been skeptical rumors also with regard to states other than Egypt, since it "completely denies all rumors and publications in this connection, whether regarding Egypt or any other Arab state." (Cairo, in Arabic, 29 October 1947)

2. Transjordan. Both Transjordan and Egypt are included in a report of a meeting of Army Commanders from Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Transjordan to be held "on the frontier." (Sharq ul-Adna, Jaffa, 12 October 1947) On the other hand, King Abdullah proclaims that he does not "seek enmity"; "the Trans-Jordanian Premier has refuted news reporting that the Transjordanian Army was making dispositions on the Palestinian borders. King Abdullah said that his country did not seek enmity with any other country but, contrariwise, preferred peace to war." (Omdurman, in Arabic, 14 October 1947)

II. TROOP MOBILIZATION

References in monitored broadcasts to troop mobilization in the event of conflict include the following fragmentary reports: that 10,000 Egyptians have volunteered; that, according to an Iraqi chief, 250,000 Iraqi volunteers could be raised; and that Arabs and Jews in Palestine have appealed for volunteers.

a. Egypt: Eid Ramadan, Vice-President of the Egyptian Ikhwan al-Muslimin association, declared that 10,000 young men of his organization had volunteered for Palestine's "defense." (Damascus, in Arabic, 23 October 1947)

b. Iraq: Sheikh Kheirallah, member of the committee organizing a meeting of 1,000 tribal leaders on 22 October, said that the Iraqi tribes could raise a quarter of a million volunteers. (Sharq ul-Adna, Jaffa, 13 October 1947)

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c. Palestinian Arabs: "Arab organizations have appealed to all Arabs (to volunteer), by means of pamphlets distributed yesterday in the Jerusalem streets." (Beirut, 18 October 1947) "Pamphlets were distributed throughout Jaffa urging Arab youths to volunteer immediately." (Cairo, 13 October 1947)

d. Palestinian Jews: "Jewish national Councils in various big Palestine cities have appealed to all Jews, men and women between the ages of 15 and 50, to volunteer for the Jewish Army." (Beirut, in Arabic, 18 October 1947)

III. PREPARATIONS ON PALESTINE FRONTIERS

There are numerous items regarding military preparations on Palestine's northern and southern frontiers, especially the northern. The eastern or Transjordanian frontier is not mentioned, except in the above-mentioned denial. (I, c, 2) Preparations in Jaffa and Haifa are mentioned, and there are rumors of Zionist troops waiting in European ports.

a. Northern Frontiers

"Jewish communities in the Galilee district, referring to the existence of Syrian mechanized forces along the frontiers, said that there was activity and a concentration of forces in the districts of Kuneitra (Danis), and east of Lake Tiberias. Many Tel Aviv correspondents reported a concentration of Arab forces in those regions as well as others. ... Jewish communities in Upper Galilee learned through their Intelligence Corps that British forces which were stationed in Hoshpina in Galilee on the borders have been evacuated and replaced by Transjordan Frontier Guards with an Arab majority." (Damascus, in Arabic, 13 October 1947)

"The newspaper HA-BE'ER points out that tension among the Jews in the north of Palestine has reached such an extent that they are unable to do any work on account of their fear of the Arab forces stationed at the northern border of Palestine. They do not dare to plow their land while the Syrian Dakota planes roar over their heads. The newspaper states that the road between Damascus and Beirut is full of light armored units. The sight of the Syrian convoy of cars is having a paralyzing effect on the Jews, who have not slept since last Saturday." (Cairo, ARAB PRESS SERVICE, in Arabic Morse, 15 October 1947)

"The Syrian Army stationed near the frontiers of Palestine and Transjordan is to start important maneuvers on Saturday (1 November)." (Brazzaville, 30 October 1947)

"Rumors are current here (Cairo) that the Iraqi Army as well as the Transjordan Army have crossed their common frontiers with the knowledge of Egypt, and that they have reached the point of concentration planned by the Arab leader, Fawzi al-Kawukji. It is said that Emir Magid Arelan, the Lebanese Defense Minister, went to the frontier region which joins Palestine. He was accompanied by two officers of the Lebanese Chief of Staff. He was met by Lt. Gen. Emir Shihab, Commander of the Forces in Southern Lebanon." (Cairo, in Arabic Morse, 12 October 1947)

"Syrian forces from the north are still passing through Damascus en route for the southern borders, with bands playing, and amidst the people's cheers for Palestine and Egypt." (Damascus, 17 October 1947)

b. Southern Frontiers

"An Egyptian regiment has received orders to move to El-Arish to join an infantry detachment stationed there. The regiment consists of one infantry detachment from Cairo, one from Alexandria, a sappers unit, an anti-aircraft battery, artillery, signals, and administrative units." (Damascus, 17 October 1947)

"Fifteen Egyptian Army planes have arrived in El-Arish, carrying equipment to provide areas where the Egyptian Army will camp with water and electricity. These forces (will) reportedly (be) sent to the Egypt-Palestine frontier." (Beirut, 18 October 1947)

"The Egyptian Defense Ministry neither confirmed nor denied today's AL-AHRAM report that 7,000 soldiers would be sent to El-Arish, near the Palestine frontiers." (Damascus, 17 October 1947)

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c. Haifa and Jaffa:

"The establishment of Arab guards for the protection of Arab regions and districts in Haifa has been completed. Villages in the neighborhood of Haifa which are adjacent to Jewish colonies were notified to send women and children to distant villages. Night patrols have also been set up in all these villages. Some families in Haifa are beginning to leave the town for the interior. National organizations in (Jaffa) are continuing their meetings to arrange the necessary measures against any danger that may befall the town." (Cairo, 15 October 1947)

d. Rumors of Jews Coming from European Ports:

"Rumors have been circulated by Zionists that they are planning an attack against Palestine. They are reportedly concentrating their forces on the Rumanian and Bulgarian shores and in Genoa in Italy. Several ships will reportedly transport these criminals to the sacred land of the Arabs. Among those ships are two ships now in Constanta harbor." (Damascus, 27 October 1947)

IV. REPORT OF COLLABORATION AMONG ARAB ARMIES

Though it is obviously not based on authoritative information, the following reported plan for inter-Arab collaboration may be of some interest:

"Circles in close relation with the Council of the Arab League believe that it has been decided to unite the efforts of the Arab Armies. Belief is prevalent that leadership of these Armies will be given to a well-known military personage, assisted by a chief of a staff organization representing the seven Arab countries, members of the League. Every Army will (preserve the national character of) each Army. Liaison officers will be appointed in each Army. It is understood that Transjordan will offer to the Arab United Army its mechanized and armed units. Syria will offer cavalry divisions, particularly the Al-Sharkas (Circassian) Infantry. Lebanon will put into the field infantry divisions. The Saudi Arabian Army Air Force will be relied upon. In the case of Iraq and Egypt, they will minister to the Arab Army in preparing its needs in weapons and guns, medical equipment, and the safeguarding of its lines of communication." (Cairo, ARAB PRESS SERVICE, in Arabic Morse, 12 October 1947)

(Note: The above mention of Saudi Arabia is the only one in monitored broadcasts from the Near East.)

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